
SENATE BILL 5399

State of Washington

57th Legislature

2001 Regular Session

By Senators Thibaudeau, Fairley, Franklin, Kohl-Welles, Costa, McAuliffe and Rasmussen; by request of Governor Locke

Read first time 01/22/2001. Referred to Committee on Health & Long-Term Care.

1 AN ACT Relating to history of caregiver performance in long-term
2 care services; amending RCW 74.39A.050; adding new sections to chapter
3 74.34 RCW; and adding a new section to chapter 74.39A RCW.

4 BE IT ENACTED BY THE LEGISLATURE OF THE STATE OF WASHINGTON:

5 NEW SECTION. **Sec. 1.** A new section is added to chapter 74.34 RCW
6 to read as follows:

7 (1) In addition to any registry maintained by the department to
8 satisfy participation requirements of federally funded programs, the
9 department shall establish and maintain a state caregiver registry
10 containing names of, and other identifying information about,
11 individuals who have been found to have abandoned, abused, financially
12 exploited, or neglected vulnerable adults. The department shall remove
13 the name of any individual from the caregiver registry who: (a) Later
14 is found by the office of appeals under chapter 34.05 RCW, or a court
15 of law not to have abandoned, abused, financially exploited, or
16 neglected vulnerable adults; or (b) was erroneously placed upon the
17 registry.

18 (2) The department shall adopt rules that are necessary to
19 implement the caregiver registry. At a minimum, the rules shall

1 address: (a) Disclosure; (b) disposition; (c) notification of
2 findings, appeal rights, and fair hearing requirements; (d) the
3 opportunity for the individual who is the subject of the investigation
4 to provide information orally or in writing prior to the preliminary
5 determination; and (e) requirements for employers to check the
6 caregiver registry.

7 (3) When a nursing home, boarding home, or adult family home, or an
8 employer providing in-home services under chapter 70.127 RCW or
9 services authorized under RCW 71A.12.040(10) and 74.09.520, reasonably
10 relies on information obtained from the caregiver registry, the
11 employer shall be immune from liability for an employment decision
12 based exclusively upon information obtained directly from the registry.

13 NEW SECTION. **Sec. 2.** A new section is added to chapter 74.34 RCW
14 to read as follows:

15 (1) If following an investigation into allegations that an
16 individual abandoned, abused, financially exploited, or neglected a
17 vulnerable adult, the department determines that a preponderance of
18 evidence exists to support the allegation, the department shall make a
19 preliminary determination of abandonment, abuse, financial
20 exploitation, or neglect. Prior to making a preliminary determination,
21 the department must make reasonable efforts to notify the individual of
22 the investigation and of the opportunity to provide information orally
23 or in writing, regarding the allegations under investigation. The
24 department shall not make a preliminary determination of neglect if the
25 individual demonstrates that the neglect was caused by factors beyond
26 his or her control. If the nursing care quality assurance commission
27 and the department of health have completed a full investigation and
28 have taken no action against a nurse licensed under chapter 18.79 RCW,
29 the department shall not initiate an investigation into the same
30 allegation of abuse, neglect, or financial exploitation in an in-home
31 setting or in a facility licensed under chapter 18.51, 70.128, or 18.20
32 RCW that may result in an individual's name being placed on the
33 caregiver registry. The individual shall be notified of the
34 preliminary determination and shall be entitled to appeal the
35 preliminary finding in an adjudicative proceeding under chapter 34.05
36 RCW. If the individual does not request an adjudicative proceeding
37 within the time allowed for appeal, or if a presiding officer issues an
38 initial order upholding the department's determination following an

1 adjudicative proceeding, the preliminary determination shall be
2 considered a finding and the department shall place such finding on the
3 caregiver registry described in section 1 of this act. This section
4 does not apply to findings of abandonment, abuse, financial
5 exploitation, or neglect by an individual who is a vulnerable adult and
6 who has the functional, mental, or physical inability to care for
7 himself or herself or who has been found incapacitated under chapter
8 11.88 RCW.

9 (2) Nothing in this section shall be construed as prohibiting the
10 department from activities that are authorized under chapter 18.20,
11 18.51, or 70.128 RCW, this chapter, or Titles XVIII and XIX of the
12 federal social security act.

13 NEW SECTION. **Sec. 3.** A new section is added to chapter 74.34 RCW
14 to read as follows:

15 In the case of a single finding of neglect, and at least one year
16 after the individual's name has been placed on the caregiver registry,
17 the individual may petition the department for removal of his or her
18 name from the caregiver registry, or the individual may petition the
19 department to be allowed to work in a licensed nursing home, boarding
20 home, or adult family home unless the individual has been convicted of
21 a crime that disqualifies him or her from working in such a facility.
22 The rules developed by the department shall describe how the petition
23 can be filed, and shall identify criteria that the department will
24 apply when making a decision on the petition.

25 Any individual whose name has been on the caregiver registry for
26 ten consecutive years may petition for the removal of his or her name
27 from the caregiver registry for any reason. In determining whether to
28 remove the individual's name from the caregiver registry, the
29 department shall consider the following information if reasonably
30 available: (1) The nature of the conduct that caused the person's name
31 to be placed on the caregiver registry; (2) the severity of harm in the
32 original investigated incident; (3) the conduct of the individual since
33 the individual's name was placed on the caregiver registry, including
34 any treatment received, criminal convictions, and employment history;
35 (4) any disqualifying criminal convictions; and (5) such other
36 information as the department determines to be relevant.

37 If the department determines the individual's name can be removed
38 from the caregiver registry, the department shall immediately remove

1 the individual's name. The department's decision to grant an
2 individual's petition for removal of findings applies only to the
3 caregiver registry and does not apply to any registry that is
4 maintained by the department in order to ensure receipt of federal
5 funds.

6 The department shall maintain records related to the petition for
7 removal in accordance with state government records retention
8 requirements, however, such records may not be disclosed, except to the
9 individual who filed the petition, or under the order of a Washington
10 state superior court. Any disclosure of records made under this
11 section is subject to privacy, safety, and confidentiality protections
12 provided in laws related to vulnerable adults and public records.

13 If the department acted in good faith and in accordance with
14 established procedures when it removed an individual's name from the
15 caregiver registry, or when it allowed an individual whose name is on
16 the caregiver registry to work in a nursing home, boarding home, or
17 adult family home setting, it shall be immune from liability for the
18 future actions of the individual.

19 NEW SECTION. **Sec. 4.** A new section is added to chapter 74.34 RCW
20 to read as follows:

21 A caregiver registry preliminary determination of abandonment,
22 abuse, financial exploitation, or neglect shall be sustained in an
23 adjudicative proceeding if the presiding officer finds it is supported
24 by a preponderance of the evidence. The presiding officer's decision
25 must be rendered within one hundred twenty days of the date the
26 individual's hearing request was received by the office of
27 administrative hearings. However, if the presiding officer finds that
28 extenuating circumstances exist that will prevent the decision from
29 being made within the one hundred twenty-day time period, the presiding
30 officer may extend the deadline only as long as is reasonably
31 necessary.

32 NEW SECTION. **Sec. 5.** A new section is added to chapter 74.34 RCW
33 to read as follows:

34 When the department learns that any in-state or out-of-state
35 program or agency, disciplining authority, or court has taken an action
36 that would prevent the individual from being employed in the care of
37 and having unsupervised access to vulnerable adults in accordance with

1 RCW 74.39A.050(8), the department shall place the individual's name and
2 other identifying information about the individual on the caregiver
3 registry and if appropriate, on any other registry that is maintained
4 by the department in order to ensure receipt of federal funds.

5 NEW SECTION. **Sec. 6.** A new section is added to chapter 74.34 RCW
6 to read as follows:

7 Subject to the following conditions, the department shall disclose
8 caregiver registry findings of abuse, neglect, abandonment, and
9 financial exploitation to: (1) Any employer providing home and
10 community services as defined in chapter 74.39A RCW, including
11 facilities licensed under chapters 18.51, 18.20, 70.127, and 70.128
12 RCW; (2) any employer of a program authorized under RCW 71A.12.040(10);
13 (3) any person who is employing, staffing, licensing, or contracting
14 for the provision of long-term care or protective services to a
15 vulnerable adult; and (4) the long-term care ombudsman. The person
16 requesting such information must provide the department with the
17 individual's correct legal name, social security number, gender, and
18 date of birth. The department may request additional information
19 necessary to ensure the accurate identification of the individual on
20 the caregiver registry. The department shall not release an
21 individual's home address, social security number, or home telephone
22 number.

23 Nothing in this act is to be construed to prevent anyone from
24 obtaining any information about themselves that is in the possession of
25 the department. The department may withhold information regarding
26 other persons as provided by law or when release of such information
27 could reasonably result in a violation or threat to any person's
28 privacy, health, or safety and such information is known by the
29 department.

30 The person requesting caregiver registry findings shall use this
31 information only for making decisions regarding employment, staffing,
32 contracting, or licensing, or the provision of care or services to
33 vulnerable adults or services authorized under RCW 74.09.520 and
34 71A.12.040(10). Further dissemination or use of the findings is
35 prohibited.

36 NEW SECTION. **Sec. 7.** A new section is added to chapter 74.39A RCW
37 to read as follows:

1 An employer providing home and community services, including
2 facilities licensed under chapters 18.51, 18.20, and 70.128 RCW, an
3 employer of a program authorized under RCW 71A.12.040(10), or an in-
4 home services agency employer licensed under chapter 70.127 RCW, who
5 discloses information about a former or current employee to a
6 prospective home and community services employer, nursing home
7 employer, or home health, hospice, or home care agency employer, is
8 presumed to be acting in good faith and is immune from civil and
9 criminal liability for such disclosure or its consequences if the
10 disclosed information relates to: (1) The employee's ability to
11 perform his or her job; (2) the diligence, skill, or reliability with
12 which the employee carried out the duties of his or her job; or (3) any
13 illegal or wrongful act committed by the employee when related to his
14 or her ability to care for a vulnerable adult. For purposes of this
15 section, the presumption of good faith may only be rebutted upon a
16 showing by clear and convincing evidence that the information disclosed
17 by the employer was knowingly false or made with reckless disregard for
18 the truth of the information disclosed. Should the employee
19 successfully rebut the presumption of good faith standard in a court of
20 competent jurisdiction, and therefore be the prevailing party, the
21 prevailing party shall be entitled to recover reasonable attorneys'
22 fees against the employer. Nothing in this section shall affect or
23 limit any other state, federal, or constitutional right otherwise
24 available.

25 **Sec. 8.** RCW 74.39A.050 and 2000 c 121 s 10 are each amended to
26 read as follows:

27 The department's system of quality improvement for long-term care
28 services shall use the following principles, consistent with applicable
29 federal laws and regulations:

30 (1) The system shall be client-centered and promote privacy,
31 independence, dignity, choice, and a home or home-like environment for
32 consumers consistent with chapter 392, Laws of 1997.

33 (2) The goal of the system is continuous quality improvement with
34 the focus on consumer satisfaction and outcomes for consumers. This
35 includes that when conducting licensing inspections, the department
36 shall interview an appropriate percentage of residents, family members,
37 resident managers, and advocates in addition to interviewing providers
38 and staff.

1 (3) Providers should be supported in their efforts to improve
2 quality and address identified problems initially through training,
3 consultation, technical assistance, and case management.

4 (4) The emphasis should be on problem prevention both in monitoring
5 and in screening potential providers of service.

6 (5) Monitoring should be outcome based and responsive to consumer
7 complaints and a clear set of health, quality of care, and safety
8 standards that are easily understandable and have been made available
9 to providers.

10 (6) Prompt and specific enforcement remedies shall also be
11 implemented without delay, pursuant to RCW 74.39A.080, RCW 70.128.160,
12 chapter 18.51 RCW, or chapter 74.42 RCW, for providers found to have
13 delivered care or failed to deliver care resulting in problems that are
14 serious, recurring, or uncorrected, or that create a hazard that is
15 causing or likely to cause death or serious harm to one or more
16 residents. These enforcement remedies may also include, when
17 appropriate, reasonable conditions on a contract or license. In the
18 selection of remedies, the safety, health, and well-being of residents
19 shall be of paramount importance.

20 (7) To the extent funding is available, all long-term care staff
21 directly responsible for the care, supervision, or treatment of
22 vulnerable persons should be screened through background checks in a
23 uniform and timely manner to ensure that they do not have a criminal
24 history that would disqualify them from working with vulnerable
25 persons. Whenever a state conviction record check is required by state
26 law, persons may be employed or engaged as volunteers or independent
27 contractors on a conditional basis according to law and rules adopted
28 by the department.

29 (8) No provider or staff, or prospective provider or staff, with a
30 stipulated finding of fact, conclusion of law, an agreed order, or
31 finding of fact, conclusion of law, or final order issued by a
32 disciplining authority, a court of law, or entered into a state
33 registry (~~(finding him or her guilty)~~) with a finding of abuse,
34 neglect, financial exploitation, or abandonment of a minor or a
35 vulnerable adult as defined in chapter 74.34 RCW shall be employed in
36 the care of and have unsupervised access to vulnerable adults except as
37 provided in section 3 of this act.

38 (9) (~~The department shall establish, by rule, a state registry~~
39 ~~which contains identifying information about personal care aides~~

1 identified under this chapter who have substantiated findings of abuse,
2 neglect, financial exploitation, or abandonment of a vulnerable adult
3 as defined in RCW 74.34.020. The rule must include disclosure,
4 disposition of findings, notification, findings of fact, appeal rights,
5 and fair hearing requirements. The department shall disclose, upon
6 request, substantiated findings of abuse, neglect, financial
7 exploitation, or abandonment to any person so requesting this
8 information.

9 ~~((10))~~) The department shall by rule develop training requirements
10 for individual providers and home care agency providers. Effective
11 March 1, 2002, individual providers and home care agency providers must
12 satisfactorily complete department-approved orientation, basic
13 training, and continuing education within the time period specified by
14 the department in rule. The department shall adopt rules by March 1,
15 2002, for the implementation of this section based on the
16 recommendations of the community long-term care training and education
17 steering committee established in RCW 74.39A.190. The department shall
18 deny payment to an individual provider or a home care provider who does
19 not complete the training requirements within the time limit specified
20 by the department by rule.

21 ~~((11))~~) (10) In an effort to improve access to training and
22 education and reduce costs, especially for rural communities, the
23 coordinated system of long-term care training and education must
24 include the use of innovative types of learning strategies such as
25 internet resources, videotapes, and distance learning using satellite
26 technology coordinated through community colleges or other entities, as
27 defined by the department.

28 ~~((12))~~) (11) The department shall create an approval system by
29 March 1, 2002, for those seeking to conduct department-approved
30 training. In the rule-making process, the department shall adopt rules
31 based on the recommendations of the community long-term care training
32 and education steering committee established in RCW 74.39A.190.

33 ~~((13))~~) (12) The department shall establish, by rule, training,
34 background checks, and other quality assurance requirements for
35 personal aides who provide in-home services funded by medicaid personal
36 care as described in RCW 74.09.520, community options program entry
37 system waiver services as described in RCW 74.39A.030, or chore
38 services as described in RCW 74.39A.110 that are equivalent to
39 requirements for individual providers.

1 (~~(14)~~) (13) Under existing funds the department shall establish
2 internally a quality improvement standards committee to monitor the
3 development of standards and to suggest modifications.

4 (~~(15)~~) (14) Within existing funds, the department shall design,
5 develop, and implement a long-term care training program that is
6 flexible, relevant, and qualifies towards the requirements for a
7 nursing assistant certificate as established under chapter 18.88A RCW.
8 This subsection does not require completion of the nursing assistant
9 certificate training program by providers or their staff. The long-
10 term care teaching curriculum must consist of a fundamental module, or
11 modules, and a range of other available relevant training modules that
12 provide the caregiver with appropriate options that assist in meeting
13 the resident's care needs. Some of the training modules may include,
14 but are not limited to, specific training on the special care needs of
15 persons with developmental disabilities, dementia, mental illness, and
16 the care needs of the elderly. No less than one training module must
17 be dedicated to workplace violence prevention. The nursing care
18 quality assurance commission shall work together with the department to
19 develop the curriculum modules. The nursing care quality assurance
20 commission shall direct the nursing assistant training programs to
21 accept some or all of the skills and competencies from the curriculum
22 modules towards meeting the requirements for a nursing assistant
23 certificate as defined in chapter 18.88A RCW. A process may be
24 developed to test persons completing modules from a caregiver's class
25 to verify that they have the transferable skills and competencies for
26 entry into a nursing assistant training program. The department may
27 review whether facilities can develop their own related long-term care
28 training programs. The department may develop a review process for
29 determining what previous experience and training may be used to waive
30 some or all of the mandatory training. The department of social and
31 health services and the nursing care quality assurance commission shall
32 work together to develop an implementation plan by December 12, 1998.

--- END ---